To Elizabeth Pease.

Boston, June 20, 1849.

Beloved Friend:

95 — In taking up my pen to write you a few hasty lines, I have never before had so strong a desire to be with you, face to face, at Darlington; for I have much that I wish to communicate, and it is far easier for me to use the tongue than to wield the pen. Is there never to be a labor-saving invention as to epistolary correspondence, by which writing can be made as easy as talking? The mechanical drudgery of putting legibly on paper the thoughts of the brain is growing more and more irksome to me: perhaps it is because those thoughts are too feeble to inspire the hand. At least, it is a great hindrance to my communicating with those I esteem, whether at home or abroad. I envy those who can write both plainly and rapidly, and who take real pleasure in driving the quill.

The first subject to which my mind naturally reverts is the sudden death of our noble little boy, Charles Follen. For your consolatory letter, touching this great bereavement, dear Helen unites with me in proffering heart-felt acknowledgments. In the hour of affliction, the sympathetic expressions and comforting suggestions of friends are of priceless value. These we have had, in great variety, and they have helped to mitigate our sorrow. That sorrow, however, was not caused so much by the mere fact of his removal, as by other considerations. Death itself to me is not terrible, is not repulsive, is not to be deplored. I see in it as clear an evidence of Divine wisdom and beneficence as I do in the birth of a child, in the works of creation, in all the arrangements and operations of nature. I neither fear nor regret its power. I neither expect nor supplicate

to be exempted from its legitimate action. It is not to be chronicled among calamities; it is not to be styled "a mysterious dispensation of Divine Providence"; it is scarcely rational to talk of being resigned to it. For what is more natural — what more universal — what more impartial — what more serviceable — what more desirable, in God's own time, hastened neither by our ignorance nor folly? Discarding as I do, as equally absurd and monstrous, the theological dogma, that death settles forever the condition of those who die, whether for an eternity of bliss or misery for the deeds done here in the body — and believing as I do, without doubt or wavering, in the everlasting progression of the human race, in the ultimate triumph of infinite love over finite error and sinfulness, in the fatherly care and boundless goodness of that Creator, "whose tender mercies are over all the works of his hands" — I see nothing strange, appalling, or even sad, in death. When, therefore, my dear friend, I tell you that the loss of my dear boy has overwhelmed me with sadness, has affected my peace by day and my repose by night, has been a staggering blow, from the shock of which I find it very difficult to recover, you will not understand me as referring to any thing pertaining to another state of existence, or as gloomily affected by a change inevitable to all: far from it. Where the cherished one who has been snatched from us is, what is his situation, or what his employment, I know not, of course; and it gives me no anxiety whatever. Until I join him at least, my responsibility to him as his guardian and protector has ceased; he does not need my aid, he cannot be benefitted by my counsel. That he will still be kindly cared for, by Him who numbers the very hairs of our heads, and without whose notice a sparrow cannot fall to the ground; that he is still living, having thrown aside his mortal drapery, and occupying a higher sphere of existence; I

do not entertain a doubt. My grief arises mainly from the conviction that his death was premature; that he was actually defrauded of his life through unskilful treatment; that he might have been saved, if we had not been most unfortunately situated at that time. This, to be sure, is not certain; and not being certain, it is the only ingredient of consolation that we find in our cup of bitterness. Perhaps none ever lose a beloved relative or friend, by death, without thinking that, if some other mode of treatment had been adopted, peradventure the result might have been very different. But my reasons for an opinion of this kind, in regard to Charles, are not based on any thing vague or fanciful. The day before he complained of feeling unwell, he looked so vigorous and blooming that his mother could not help recording the fact in a letter which she was then writing to a sister residing in a neighboring city. Of all our children, he was the most robust, the most beautifully developed, and the last we expected to be taken from us. During the week that we were removing from our residence in Pine-street to another in Suffolk-street, the weather was cold and stormy, and he was imprudent in neglecting to wear his overcoat, &c. On Saturday afternoon, he complained of feeling sick at the stomach, looked very much flushed in the face, and vomited occasionally. His limbs were also painfully affected, as if by rheumatism. For the first four days, I did not regard him as dangerously ill, and therefore did not seek for any medical advice. I thought he had taken a violent cold, which would yield to a very simple treatment in a short time; but I happened to be so situated as to be able to give him very little attention. Helen kept assuring me that she regarded him as a very sick child, but I thought she was unnecessarily alarmed. Had I known that the whole force

of his disease was upon the brain, I too should have been filled with the deepest anxiety. We gave him the wet sheet three or four times, but this was not what he needed. We also gave him the homœopathic prescriptions as accurately as we could discover his symptoms described in our books, but without much skill or knowledge. On Wednesday, I was at my office, not expecting to return home, as usual on that day when I am getting my Liberator ready for the press, until late at night; but at noon Helen sent me a note, saying that Charles was evidently growing worse, and urging me to come home with as little delay as possible. While hesitating whether to go for a physician, I was advised by a friend to try a medicated vapor bath, who spoke of its efficacy in the highest terms, and said that his wife would be happy to administer it, as she had given it with great success in a multitude of cases. Still erroneously supposing that Charles was suffering from a rheumatic fever, and thinking that a powerful perspiration was what he needed, I resolved to try the experiment. After some delay, the chair and apparatus were procured, and in the evening my friend's wife kindly came to give the bath. Up to that hour, Charles had been perfectly rational, though somewhat lethargic, except when moved, when the pain in his limbs made him scream with agony. While he was in the chair, some fifteen or twenty minutes, his sufferings appeared to be insupportable — he became perfectly frantic — his screams were appalling — and he begged most piteously to be released. No other person was in the room, except the lady and myself. She endeavored to soothe him as much as possible, and I appealed to his little manhood in the best way I could,

thinking he was nervously affected, and urging him to bear it all with fortitude, as he would undoubtedly be benefitted by the operation. Such was my confidence in the judgment of the lady alluded to, I did not even suspect that she might be raising the steam to an undue height. Alas! on coming out of the bath, we found that the poor boy had been horribly scalded, especially where he had sat down, the skin being entirely destroyed on one side; and such was the action on the brain, so intense and overwhelming, that from that fatal hour he became delirious, and so remained until he was relieved from his sufferings by death on the subsequent Sunday evening. Dying in this manner, do you wonder, my dear friend, that our grief is excessive? or that

"We grieve the more because we grieve in vain"?

True, it is not wise to brood over such a catastrophe, and we endeavor to keep the thought of it from our minds as much as possible; but we should be something less or something more than human not to be most deeply affected by it. Well, it was all kindly intended on our part; we meant it to save, not to destroy; and, as I have already remarked, there is no certainty that he would have been saved, even if this calamitous result had not made his recovery impossible. The fever struck upon the brain with great force from the beginning; and it therefore made his case a critical one, as he was a child full of warm blood and nervous excitability. An hour before his death, I said in his ear as distinctly as possible, "Dear Charley is dying!" He seemed to understand what I said, gave a gentle sigh, then smiled. Once more I said, "Charley will soon be with our darling Lizzie"—(he was passionately fond of her memory, and in health used frequently to express the wish that he might be

with her) — again there was a smile, and an evident recognition of what I said. Just before he expired, he rallied for a moment, and seeing his mother standing by his bedside, and also two beloved friends, smiled upon each of them in the most expressive manner; and then insensibility followed to the end.

You have the daguerrean likenesses of Fanny and Lizzie — I wish it were in my power to send you one of Charley. But we never had his taken, though we thought of doing so, a hundred times. Why I did not have one taken before his interment, I can hardly tell; perhaps because he was more altered ~~in~~ appearance than Lizzie. But I now lament that I did not get an artist to make an attempt. He was a beautiful boy, but in no frail or delicate sense. He had a fine intellectual and moral development, with great bodily energy; he seemed born to take a century upon his shoulders, without stooping; his eyes were large, lustrous, and charged with electric light; his voice was clear as a bugle, melodious, and ever ringing in our ears, ~~from~~ from the dawn of day to the ushering in of night — so that since it has been stilled, our dwelling has seemed to be almost without an occupant. But, above all, he was remarkable for the strength and fervor of his affection. He loved with all his soul, mind, and might. In this respect, I have never seen his equal. All the friends who have visited us for the last three or four years have had the strongest proofs of his attachment. He would almost smother them beneath a tornado of Kisses; his embraces were given with intense vital energy, and "with a will." He had not a vicious quality.

Dear little Fanny feels the bereavement greatly.

He was her oracle and champion. His affection she as strongly reciprocated. Not a day passes, that she does not spontaneously allude to him in the most touching manner. But she has no idea of death that is gloomy or repulsive; for we have taught her to look upon it rationally, philosophically, and in the light of growth and progress. Though her tears she will often smile to think that "he is now with dear Lizzie," and the thought of one day joining them is to her full of thrilling pleasure. Indeed, she sometimes talks like one who is

"Dressed for the flight, and ready to be gone" —

so that we are really apprehensive she will early be called away.

In the cycle of ages, the death of one person — of millions of persons — however beloved, or whatever their characteristics, is a very insignificant event; but, in its sphere and immediate relationship, it is weighty, trying, momentous. You will pardon me, therefore, my sympathising friend, in occupying so large a portion of this letter with the details of our recent bereavement. This is the first time I have attempted to give any one an account of it on paper; for, until now, I have shrunk from the performance of such a task. I need not add — for you can easily imagine — that the blow has been severely felt by my dear wife, and that her heart is still wrung with anguish, especially in view of the unfortunate circumstances attending C's sickness. But we both feel that "it is well with the child"; and we are comforted in the assurance that we shall again embrace him in the arms of our love as really as we have done so on earth. O, how glorious is the thought of immortality! how glorious are the visions of eternity! "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

The magnetic telegraph brings the said intelligence, to-day, that Cassius M. Clay has been killed in a rencounter with a Mr. Turner, at a public meeting in Kentucky. No particulars are received, except that the parties first used pistols, which flashed in the pan, when they drew their bowie-knives, and closed in a death-struggle. Mr. Clay was stabbed to the heart, and immediately expired; and his antagonist was so dreadfully wounded that he survived only a few hours. This is an awful occurrence. You will recollect with what ardor and ability Mr. Clay espoused the anti-slavery cause in Kentucky three or four years since; how boldly he uttered his sentiments through the medium of his paper, the "True American"; how a mob of "gentlemen of property and standing" assailed his office, and destroyed his press and types, while he was lying dangerously ill; how, on his recovery, he again started his paper, with indomitable courage; how, on the commencement of the war with Mexico, he denounced it in unmeasured terms as waged for a diabolical purpose, and without the slightest provocation; how, almost in the twinkling of an eye, he espoused that war, and was placed at the head of a company of volunteers; how, as soon as he arrived on the Mexican soil, he and his party were taken prisoners by a superior Mexican force; how he remained in prison until the termination of that war, having won no glory, but a great deal of shame, and lost the respect and esteem of the friends of freedom on both sides of the Atlantic; and how he was welcomed on his return home by his old persecutors, seeing that he had suffered in their behalf. That he emancipated all his slaves will ever redound to his credit; that he earnestly desired to see slavery abolished in his native State, I have no doubt; that he enlisted

in the Mexican war for the purpose of aiding in the extension of slavery, probably no one believes; that he was a man of generous impulses and warm sympathies is certain; that he had any fixed principles of justice and morality is not apparent. He was neither a coward nor a time-server; and yet his courage was more of the animal than of the moral kind, and he could not wholly crucify himself to the opinions of those among whom he dwelt. In plunging so abruptly into the Mexican war, his purposes appear to have been purely political, as (being a strong Whig) he did not wish all the "glory" (!!) of it to be monopolized by the Democratic administration — and he thought it might be the means of helping to subvert that administration, which was so rankly pro-slavery.

Within the last six months, the subject of abolishing slavery in Kentucky has attracted unusual attention, and been eliciting more and more discussion. The boldest emancipationist, however, has ventured to propose nothing better than a distant abolition of the system, in the most gradual manner, and accompanied with the condition of colonization in Africa. Cassius M. Clay has recently written and spoken freely in favor of bringing slavery to a termination in Kentucky; he has advocated the measure with his usual ardor at various public meetings, at the last of which he appears to have received his death-wound.* I presume it will appear that he was attacked by Turner, and that he fought in what is called "self-defence"; but, alas! that he should have equipped himself with such weapons to carry on a moral agitation! But his death has been caused by the murderous spirit of slavery, and must powerfully react on it.

* A later report is, that Clay survives his wounds, but that Turner is dead.

Dear Henry C. Wright is now laboring in the great State of Ohio, where he will probably remain until next winter. I have had no letters from him for some time past; but I see, by the Cleveland "Free Democrat," that he lately attended a Peace Convention in that county, which he addressed, and which was also addressed by the Hon. Joshua R. Giddings. The latter was chosen a delegate to attend the Peace Convention in Paris, to be holden in September next; and it is said that he has accepted the nomination. Possibly, before his return home, you may have an opportunity to see or hear him. For a politician, he is a man of rare integrity, humanity, and moral courage; and no one on the floor of Congress has ever run so much risk, or exhibited so much heroism, in bearding the lion of slavery in its den — the District of Columbia — as himself. But while he swears to support the Constitution of the United States, and to maintain inviolate the blood-stained American Union, his moral power must be greatly impaired, and the force of his testimonies against slavery very much weakened. I think, however, that, in spirit, he is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

As for the Peace Convention at Paris, it will probably do some good; but I fear it will prove a somewhat sentimental affair, and proceed rather mincingly in its work. As for disarming the nations of the earth, by appealing to "the powers that be," rather than to the people, individually and collectively, I believe it will prove chimerical; still, any agitation of the Peace question must do good, and serve to open the eyes of the people to the horrors and iniquities of war. But into what a baptism of blood is Europe about to be plunged!

I suppose you have read Henry's Autobiography. How do you like it? Much of it will be familiar to you; to all its sentiments you may not be ready to subscribe. There is no evidence of care or labor in what he writes; his style is always negligent and too diffuse, and his repetitions are multitudinous; yet he is an independent thinker, a fearless advocate of whatever he believes to be the truth, a world-embracing philanthropist, and a most sturdy reformer. His abhorrence of injustice, oppression, blood-shedding, is admirably intense, and in entire accordance with the scriptural injunction, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." His disgust at mere forms and ceremonies, to the disregard of every sound religious principle, is most hearty, and he pours his contempt upon them without measure. His estimate of man is exalted, as a being too sacred to be injured, and as of paramount importance to all human institutions. His ideas of what constitutes religion and the worship of God will doubtless startle many, and offend some; but they will lead to reflection and discussion, which are much needed on such stereotyped and traditional subjects. His letters to me injure the unity of such a volume, and break the charm of consecutive narration; but, as a whole, this Autobiography is a valuable contribution to the cause of spiritual and personal freedom, and will be better appreciated hereafter than at present. In copying from his diary as far back as 1825, he appears unconsciously to have mingled some of his latest thoughts and expressions on various religious and reformatory subjects; and thus subjects himself to ~~an appearance~~ the imputation of wearing a clerical garb long after he professes to have outgrown it. But these anachronisms subtract nothing from the value of his sentiments, though they afford ground for captious criticism.

You will learn from the Standard and Liberator how very interesting, enthusiastic and encouraging were our anti-slavery anniversaries in New York and Boston. If you could have been present, I am sure you would have felt repaid for the trip across the Atlantic. [En passant, are we never to have the pleasure of seeing you here? Only think how quickly the voyage is now made!] Wendell, as usual, produced a powerful impression by his eloquent appeals and bold avowals. He always speaks to the trinity in man — to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. I love and admire him more and more. Douglass was in full strength and power, and acquitted himself to the astonishment of many, and the admiration of all. Foster was in the prophet-vein of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and made the ears of a hireling clergy and a corrupt church to tingle. Pillsbury was equally effective. We have never had so many runaway slaves on our platform as on these occasions. The remarkable case of the one who escaped in a box from Virginia, excited the deepest interest, and created a powerful sensation. I presume it will be extensively noticed in England. What a country is this, what a people are we, that such expedients should be necessary to obtain liberty, even at the almost certain loss of life! Only look at the action of the two General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, recently, in regard to the enslavement of a population in their midst longer than that of all Scotland! The New School refusing to place slavery in the category of immoralities; and the Old School declaring its purpose not to have any thing to do with the question! Such is the American Church.

Wendell informs me that he has received a most generous donation from you towards a fund intended for the benefit of my family, which a few friends are kindly endeavoring to raise, and of which I have known nothing until recently. Be assured, this fresh token of your friendship, which has been manifested on so many occasions and in so many ways, is more gratefully appreciated than words can express. It fills me with humiliation, however, to think that I am not more worthy to receive it. I know, to some extent at least, how many must be the calls upon you for pecuniary assistance at home, and how large (with your sympathetic and generous spirit) must be the drain upon your finances. As to the contemplated fund, the attempt to raise it has taken me entirely by surprise; and I am sure I have done nothing to deserve it, for I have only done my duty. Would that I could add, my whole duty! Whatever the sum may be, I do not mean or desire to have anything to do with its expenditure. In the hands of the faithful friends who have kindly consented to act as trustees, it will find a safe deposit, and be appropriated in the most judicious manner. May my future course be such as to give no contributor regret that he ever assisted me in my necessities!

Our beloved friend Mrs. Eddy has safely returned from her foreign tour. How glad am I that she visited Darlington, and had the pleasure of seeing you under your own roof — a pleasure which she describes as very great on her part, diminished by nothing but the necessary brevity of the interview. To hear her speak of you and home was next to my being present in bodily form: the reminiscences of my own visit

came thronging up from the sanctuary of my memory. I may not indulge the hope of ever being permitted again to cross the Atlantic; and yet there are so many choice spirits abroad, whose faces I yearn to see, that at times I feel as if I must once more take them by the hand, and enjoy once more their delightful companionship. Some of them ought to come over here, by way of reciprocity: we owe them obligations which we are most anxious to discharge.

I shall send this letter by a young lady, warmly interested in the anti-slavery cause — Miss Emma Weston, the youngest sister of Maria W. Chapman. She is to join her sisters in Paris, and will thus leave another vacancy in our little circle in Boston. I presume you will see her before her final return to this country, but not before the expiration of her sojourn on the continent. About the 1st of August, our estimable friend Mrs. E. L. Follen, (with her sister, Miss Cabot, and son, Charles Follen,) is also to go to Europe, where she expects to remain two or three years. She is a charming woman, and the beloved of all who know her. I hope she will not fail of seeing you; for the interview could not fail to be mutually delightful. Another of our anti-slavery laborers is to visit England this summer — I mean William W. Brown, the fugitive slave, whose narrative you may have read, and who has so long and so acceptably pleaded the cause of his oppressed brethren in Massachusetts. He is very agreeable in his manners, neat in his personal appearance, persuasive in his eloquence and intelligent in his mind. I think he will make a very favorable impression on an English audience. He will do what he can to uphold genuine, uncompromising abolitionism.